

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

CLAIM 1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system for returning alternate entity contact information of one type in response to a query having ~~different~~ contact information of the same type, for the same entity, comprising:

- a) a data storage means for storing data;
- b) a computer database of contact information consisting of a plurality of different types of contact information for a plurality of entities, which resides in said data storage means;
- c) a first means for receiving, from a query originator comprising a person or computer program, one or more queries, each comprising at least one element of contact information for ~~each~~ an entity;
- d) a second means for accessing and searching said database that
(d1) compares the contact information in said query to the contents of said database, (d2) identifies contact information in said database related to said entity in said query, and (d3) identifies alternate contact information of the same type as said query which is related to the entity; and
- e) a third means for returning a response to queries that returns, in response to said query originator, said response comprising different contact information of the same type as in said query, said different contact information corresponding to the same entity as in said query, and said response comprising data in a computer or human readable, computer storable, and computer transmittable format.

CLAIM 2. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system, as in Claim 1, wherein said second means further comprises:

- a) a means for searching said database for the existence of a first type of contact information which is contained in said query;
- b) a means for identifying contact information of a second type which is related to the same entity as said query;
- c) a means for searching through said database, using said second type of personal contact information; and
- d) a means for identifying, in the database, alternate contact information of the first type in said query which is related to said second type of personal contact information, for the same entity.

CLAIM 3. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system, as in Claim 2, wherein the second means further comprises a means for repeating said searching and said identifying means, until all related contact information of the type in said query for said entity is identified in said database.

CLAIM 4. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system, as in Claim 1, wherein the third means further comprises a means for selecting a single one amongst more than one alternate contact information elements of the same type as said query if a single result per entity is required and if more than one alternate contact point is found.

CLAIM 5. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system, as in Claim 1, wherein the contact information type of said query and the returned data is an Email address.

CLAIM 6. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system, as in Claim 2, wherein the contact information type of said query and the returned data is an Email address, and said second type is a name and postal address.

CLAIM 7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system, as in Claim 3, wherein the contact information type of said query and the returned data is an Email address.

CLAIM 8. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system, as in Claim 4, wherein the contact information type of said query, the alternate contact information elements, and the returned data is an Email address.

CLAIM 9. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system according to Claim 1, wherein the system further comprises a means for obtaining permission from the entity in said query, prior to the response to said query.

CLAIM 10. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system according to Claim 2, wherein the system further comprises a means for obtaining permission from the entity in said query, prior to the response to said query.

CLAIM 11. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system according to Claim 3, wherein the system further comprises a means for obtaining permission from the entity in said query, prior to the response to said query.

CLAIM 12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system according to Claim 4, wherein the system further comprises a means for obtaining permission from the entity in said query, prior to the response to said query.

CLAIM 13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for obtaining alternate contact information for an entity by returning different entity contact information, ~~of one type~~ in response to a query having ~~different~~ contact information of the same type, for the same entity, comprising the steps of:

a) receiving a query consisting of entity contact information of a first type, said query having been originated by a person or computer program;

b) ~~a)~~ accessing a computer database of contact information of a plurality of types corresponding to a plurality of entities, said entities consisting of persons or businesses or both;

c) ~~b)~~ comparing said first type of contact information in said query with the contents of said database;

d) ~~e)~~ if said first type of contact information in said query is included in said database, identifying contact information of a second type in said database, which is related to said first type of contact information in said query;

d1) ~~e2)~~ identifying, in said database, one or more alternative contact information elements of the first type related to the entity in said query by using said second type of related contact information to search said database;

d2) ~~e3)~~ generating and returning a response to said originator of said query which includes the said identified alternate contact information of the first type related to said entity in said query, said response comprising data in a computer or human readable, computer storable, and computer transmittable format; and

e) ~~d)~~ generating and returning a response to said originator of said query indicating that alternate contact information of the first type for said entity is not included in said database, if this is the case, and said response comprising data in a computer or human readable, computer storable, and computer transmittable format.

CLAIM 14. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method, as in Claim 13 9, further comprising the steps of repeatedly searching the database, using said second type of contact information and alternate contact information of said first type for repeatedly searching said database, until all related contact information of said first type for said entity is identified in said database.

CLAIM 15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to Claim 13 9, further comprising the step of obtaining permission from said entity, prior to said response to said query.

CLAIM 16. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to Claim 15 44, wherein the step of obtaining permission from said entity comprises the additional steps of:

- 1) generating and transmitting a permission request to said entity;
- 2) obtaining permission from said entity; and
- 3) discarding contact information for said entity from said response, if said permission is not obtained.

CLAIM 17. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method, according to Claim 13 9, further comprising the additional step of identifying the single alternate contact information element which is most beneficial to the initiator of the query, prior to generating a response to said query, if more than one contact information element of said first type is identified in the database.

CLAIM 18. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method, according to Claim 13 9, wherein ~~the~~ said first type of contact information in said query and the alternate contact information in said response ~~are~~ is an Email addresses; ~~and said second type is~~ a name and postal address.

CLAIM 19. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method, according to Claim 14 40, wherein ~~the~~ said first type of contact information in said query and the alternate contact information in said response ~~are~~ is an Email addresses; ~~and said second type is~~ a name and postal address.

CLAIM 20. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method, according to Claim ~~15~~ 14, wherein ~~the said~~ first type of contact information in said query and the alternate contact information in said response ~~are~~ is an Email addresses.

CLAIM 21. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method, according to Claim ~~16~~ 12, wherein ~~the said~~ first type of contact information in said query and the alternate contact information in said response ~~are~~ is an Email addresses.

CLAIM 22. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method, according to Claim ~~17~~ 13, wherein ~~the said~~ first type of contact information in said query and the alternate contact information in said response ~~are~~ is an Email addresses.

CLAIM 23. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for obtaining alternate contact information for an entity by returning different entity contact information, of one type in response to a query having ~~different~~ contact information of the same type, for the same entity, comprising the steps of:

- a) receiving a query consisting of entity contact information of a first type, said query having been originated by a person or computer program;
- b) ~~a)~~ accessing a database, said database having been populated with a plurality of contact information corresponding to a plurality of entities;
- c) ~~b)~~ comparing said contact information in said query with said plurality of contact information in said database;
- d) ~~e)~~ if ~~the said~~ contact information in said query is included in said database, identifying an entity in said database that matches the entity in said query and is associated with the contact information in said query;
- d1) ~~e2)~~ identifying all the other alternate contact information of the same type as in said query associated with the entity in said database by using alternate contact information of a second type and repeatedly searching through said database using said alternate contact information of a second type and alternate contact information of said first type to find all contact information related to said entity and;

~~d2) e3)~~ generating and returning a response to said query which includes the alternate contact information identified for the entity in said the query, said response comprising data in a computer or human readable, computer storable, and computer transmittable format, and

e) ~~d)~~ generating and returning a response indicating if alternate contact information for the entity in said query is not included in said database, said response comprising data in a computer readable, computer storable, and computer transmittable format.

CLAIM 24. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method, according to Claim ~~23~~ 19, wherein ~~the~~ said first type of contact information in said query and the alternate contact information in said response ~~are is an~~ Email addresses, and said second type of contact information is a name and postal address.

CLAIM 25. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-based system for populating and maintaining an entity contact information database comprising:

a) a computer database containing a plurality of contact information for a plurality of entities, said contact information being associated with the appropriate entity and said contact information comprising an Email address and at least one from the group consisting of an Email address, a name, a postal address, a governmentally issued identifying number, a birth date, and a telephone number;

b) a receiver module for receiving one or more datasets, each dataset having a plurality of contact information for a plurality of entities, said contact information comprising at least two from the group consisting of an Email address, a name, a postal address, a governmentally issued identifying number, a birth date, and a telephone number;

c) an identifier module for identifying selected data from the dataset to be merged into said database by comparing contact information from datasets from the receiver with contact information in said computer database; and

d) a data merger module for merging, and storing in a tangible medium, selected data into said database by associating existing data with datasets from the receiver.

CLAIM 26. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) The system according to Claim 25 ~~24~~, wherein the system additionally comprises a computing device for controlling said database, said receiver, said identifier, and said data merger module.

CLAIM 27. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method, performed in a computing device, for populating and maintaining an entity contact information database, comprising the steps of:

a) establishing a database in a computer storage device having a plurality of first data records, said first data records comprised of an Email address and an associated contact information element said contact information element comprises at least one from the group consisting of: an Email address, a name, a postal address, a governmentally issued identifying number, a birth date, and a telephone number;

b) receiving one or more datasets, each dataset having a plurality of second data records, said second data records including at least two from the group consisting of an Email address, a name, a postal address, a governmentally issued identifying number, a birth date, and a telephone number;

c) identifying selected data from said second data records to be merged into said database; and

d) merging, and storing in a tangible medium, said selected data into said database.

CLAIM 28. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to Claim 27 ~~23~~, wherein the step c) of identifying selected data further comprises the steps of:

c1) comparing each data record of each dataset with the contents of said database; and

c2) identifying and selecting any data that does not exist in said database to be merged into said database.

CLAIM 29. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to Claim 27-23, wherein the step c) of identifying selected data further comprises the steps of:

c1) comparing each record of each dataset with a previously received version of the record, if such version exists;

c2) determining whether any of the data elements pertaining to a entity in the dataset have changed since the previously received of the record; and

c3) selecting changed data elements for merging into said database.

CLAIM 30. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method, as in Claim 25-29, wherein said changed data elements for merging into said database are Email addresses.

CLAIM 31. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to Claim 27-23, wherein the step c) of identifying selected data further comprises the steps of:

c1) grouping each record of each dataset with other records in the dataset and/or records in the database by contact information other than an Email address that can be used to identify a entity;

c2) identifying records that share the same data elements used in c1) but have different Email addresses; and

c3) selecting the multiple email addresses identified for ~~a~~ an entity for merging into said database.

CLAIM 32. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to Claim 27-23, wherein the step c) of identifying selected data further comprises the step of identifying all received data records as candidates for merging in the database.

CLAIM 33. (WITHDRAWN) The method according to Claim 23, wherein the step c) is performed in a computing device.

CLAIM 34. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to Claim 27-23, wherein the step c) of identifying selected ones further includes a step of comparing similar, but inexact, contact data elements to determine if the data elements are equivalent.

CLAIM 35. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to Claim 27-23, wherein the step d) of merging the selected contact information elements comprises an additional step of inserting each one of plurality of selected contact information elements and relationships between contact information elements and entities into said database.

CLAIM 36. (WITHDRAWN--CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to Claim 27-23, further comprises the steps of:

- e) periodically receiving a plurality of datasets, each dataset having a plurality of second data records; and
- f) repeating step c) through e).